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It is to be hoped that Miss Lyle will extend her researches to the other cycles. At present the fact that her comparisons are almost exclusively confined to the York and Towneley plays leaves unanswered a number of questions which arise in connection with the problem in its wider aspects. Conceivably it may be found that subsequent revisions have obscured the original relationship existing between single plays, or groups of plays, in two or more cycles, and that in such circumstances the identity not of entire cycles but merely of parts of cycles need be posited. In any case various resemblances between the York, Towneley, true-Coventry, Chester and Hegge plays obviously of non-liturgical origin—the presence of parts of the *Doctors* in at least four of the cycles, for example—still await a satisfactory explanation.

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Dramatic Technique. By George Pierce Baker. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919.

Professor Baker's *Dramatic Technique* is written "for the person who cannot be content except when writing plays." It concerns itself only incidentally with historical surveys and critical analyses, making its chief aim to state and explain certain fundamental principles of dramatic technique in terms that can be understood by the novice. Compared with various short handbooks on play-making, this volume stands out for its thoro treatment of perplexing problems and its admirable freedom from dogmatic statement.

The method of procedure is largely inductive. If he wishes to explain, for instance, how to make dramatic exposition at once clear and interesting, Professor Baker does not dictate arbitrary rules to be followed by the novice. Realizing that such an art as writing plays has only a few binding rules but a great many gen-

C. M. lines 232*-5* with *York* 39, ll. 39-41, and *Towneley* 26, ll. 563-8; cf. *C. M.* ll. 242*-4* with *Y.* ll. 82-5 and *T.* ll. 592-4; cf. *C. M.* ll. 331*-6* with *Y.* 40, ll. 67-9, and *T.* 27, ll. 98-9, 102-3; cf. *C. M.* ll. 339*-44* with *Y.* ll. 70-2, and *T.* ll. 118-21, 130; cf. *C. M.* ll. 347*-50*, with *T.* ll. 136-9; cf. *C. M.* ll. 355*-7*, with *Y.* ll. 110-2; cf. *C. M.* ll. 359*-66*, with *Y.* ll. 114-20, and *T.* ll. 183-8; cf. *C. M.* ll. 367*-70*, with *Y.* ll. 123-4, and *T.* ll. 195-6; cf. *C. M.* ll. 393*-6*, with *Y.* ll. 144-7, and *T.* ll. 251-4.

eral principles of success, he guides the reader through a maze of plays in which the exposition is felt to be effective, contrasts these with others less effective, and finally gives the novice a definite idea of both the *how* and the *why* of successful exposition. Except in the hands of a mature critic like Professor Baker, this method would be hopelessly confusing; it involves reviewing hundreds of plays, both good and bad, with clear insight and judgment. It succeeds because the work has been done in this case by one who knows the drama of all ages, and who nevertheless has kept always in mind the fundamental difference between a history and a handbook on technique.

The best features of the volume are the clearness of the early chapters, and the common sense applied throughout the whole book to countless dramatic puzzles. There is no bombastic attempt to show the author's historical knowledge of the drama. If an historical survey is introduced, it is brought in as a definite help toward the solution of some problem of technique. One is reminded of a master jeweller taking to pieces hundreds of watches made in different ages,—not to write a history of watchmaking, but to enable his apprentice to make a watch that shall keep perfect time. Of special value are the chapters on Characterization, Dialogue, and Making a Scenario.

The typography is, in the main, good. On p. 32 the final *t* has been dropped from the name *Tybalt*, and on p. 361 there is a reference to "the bracketed part" of a speech in which there are no brackets. But these and a few other oversights are trifling enough.

Although in a work of such wide scope some omissions are doubtless necessary, I regret especially that "detailed consideration of the one-act play has been reserved for later special treatment." The one-act play is popular today, and it is certainly the best form on which a novice may begin his experimenting. Again, I cannot but wish some rearrangement of material had made possible the introduction of an analysis of the difference between the elusive "closet drama" and the drama proper. The author sets forth with infinite pains the almost self-evident differences between the art of the novelist and that of the dramatist; but he brushes aside, rather than illuminates, the large class of plays interesting to read but hopeless to produce.

If the volume has a serious fault, it is a tendency to ramble.

Certain individual chapters—like the one of eighty pages entitled “From Subject to Plot; Arrangement for Clearness, Emphasis, Movement,”—cover more ground than is perhaps warranted. And this fault is aggravated by the haphazard way of inserting summaries when least needed.

Taking the book as a whole, I am inclined to think it achieves much more than its purpose of being a hand-book of dramatic technique. It contains more sound, incisive criticism, of more plays, than any work of recent years. And tho originally designed as a guide for young playwrights, it cannot but please that wider group of readers whose interest is critical rather than creative.

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Hamlet, III, IV, 64

Heere is your husband like a mildewed eare,
Blasting his wholesome brother.

Steevens explains this as an allusion to Pharaoh's dream in *Genesis* 41. He is quoted by Malone (1821), and this explanation is frequently repeated by succeeding editors, including that of one of the best recent editions of the play. I believe that a careful comparison of Hamlet's words with the Bible passage will show that there is no foundation for this traditional interpretation.

In the Bible-story there are “seven thinne eares and blasted with the Eastwind” (*Genesis* 41, 6). Here the sense of *blasted* is evidently close to its primitive meaning,—“injured by a noxious wind.”¹ There is nothing in the Bible-story to lead Shakespeare to confuse this with mildew-blast, with which he was familiar. The seven thin ears swallow up the seven good ears. Clearly this is based on no customary action of nature, but belongs wholly to the realm of dreams, the action perhaps being suggested by the slightly less impossible feat of the seven lean kine. The seven thin ears have themselves been blasted, withered by the hot east wind,—a fact most aptly suggestive, in Egypt, of the famine foretold; but they do not *blast* the others, they *swallow* them,—also equally

¹ This is to be expected in the oriental imagery of the Bible; cf. *Ezekiel* 19, 12: “and the East wind dried vp her fruite”; *Hosea* 13, 15; *Jonah* 4, 5, 8.